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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

Friday, July 14, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CHERRIES". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The tips I have today--for using and cooking cherries--came to me in turn, from the Federal Bureau of Home Economics. In a minute or two, I'm going to pass on to you some of their suggestions for using both sweet and sour cherries. But first, here's a bit of news--about the supply of cherries on the market.

To put it mildly--cherries have been plentiful this year. They've been so plentiful in fact--that crop reporters of the United States Department of Agriculture expect this year's crop to go down on record as the largest we've ever had. And they say that the chief reason for this record crop is the big increase of cherries in the states that grow sour or "pie" varieties.

These sour cherries are also sometimes called "Eastern" cherries. That's because the large share of the commercial crop of sour cherries comes from five Eastern states. Of course, in home orchards, these so-called "Eastern" cherries grow in every state of the Union.

Sweet cherries are often called "Western" cherries--because practically all the commercial crop comes from seven states west of the Rocky Mountains.

But that's enough of cherry news and cherry geography. Now for some practical pointers about the food value and the numerous uses for cherries.

"Most persons who eat cherries appreciate them first of all because of their pleasing flavor. Meal-planners value them for this fine flavor--and also for their color and general attractiveness. But nutrition experts rate cherries good to eat

for the vitamin C they contribute. Cherries rate as a good source of vitamin C--which is one of the vitamins we need every day.

"Getting sweet cherries ready to eat is no job at all in the kitchen. Since nature has made cherries a perfect dessert to eat out of hand--they need only be washed--arranged--and sometimes pitted. On their stems, they make a colorful garnish for fruit cups--or salads--or hanging on the tip of a slice of honedew melon. Or if you want to go to the trouble of pitting them, they mix well with other fruits and are extra good in gelatin dishes.

"As for sour cherries, they're more often served cooked--in pies, as sauce, or in preserves. Of these three favorites--the favorite of all is juicy cherry pie--made up from fresh cherries in season--or the year round from canned or frozen fruit."

When it comes to making good cherry pie--there probably are as many recipes as there are cookbooks. But here's one suggestion for getting a pie with a crisp bottom crust.

"One way to make sure that the bottom crust will not be soggy and soaked with juice is to bake a pastry shell ahead of time. Then pour into this the partly cooked and slightly thickened cherry filling. With the bottom crust already partly baked and the filling partly cooked--it'll take only about half an hour in a moderate oven to finish the pie. The top crust should then be a golden brown.

"Sometimes this top crust is solid--but many cherry pie experts like to show the bright red color of the cherries. So they lay strips of dough lattice fashion across the cherries for the top crust.

"As to the amount of each ingredient in a pie--that depends. If the pie is medium sized, about 4 cups of pitted cherries will be enough. If the cherries are very sour, you'll probably need about 1 cup of sugar for these 4 cups of fruit.

Naturally the exact amount of sugar will vary with your taste as well as the tartness of the cherries.

"Then about two tablespoons of butter and a little salt will be needed for each pie."

As for the thickening in a cherry pie--good cooks agree that it's best to be conservative about that.

"There needs to be only enough cornstarch--or flour--or tapioca to keep the juice from running too much. Any more thickening than this will make the filling stiff and starchy.

"Cornstarch thickens the mixture clearly and is often used when cherries are cooked before they go into the crust. Cornstarch should always be mixed first with a little water or some of the cherry juice--and cooked thoroughly before it is combined with the other ingredients in the pie."

Beside pie--another favorite use of sour cherries is in sauce made from cherries cooked and sweetened. Cherry sauce lends distinction and taste to cereal puddings--rice pudding for instance, or bread pudding. And it's good served over cottage pudding, or plain cake--or over biscuits for a shortcake.

As for putting up cherries for next winter, here's a word or two about that.

"Cherries are one of the foods easy to can at home. They may be canned pitted or unpitted. The most satisfactory way to process them for home canning is in a boiling water bath. That's because cherries--like most fruits--are acid, and in them forms of bacteria are killed in a reasonable length of time at the temperature of boiling water."

Well, those are all the suggestions I have time for today--for cooking or canning this year's big crop of cherries. But let me remind you again--"If you can bake cherry pie"--there's never been a better time to show your skill than right now in mid-July.

